

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S MIDDLE CLASS

Next year, the Education and the Workforce Committee will be dedicated to the mission of strengthening America's middle class. The Committee will address these key concerns:

✓ **High quality public schools.** The Committee will get to work quickly on reauthorizing the **No Child Left Behind law**. Congressman Miller is committed to preserving the integrity and key goals of the law, including closing the achievement gap, while responding to concerns with the law by improving it. Part of the Committee's challenge next year will be to determine which problems with the law stem from implementation issues, which stem from inadequate funding, and which stem from a need to improve the statute itself. The Committee will also reauthorize the **Head Start early education law**, looking at ways to build on the program's success and give more children the early tools they need to succeed in school and life.

✓ **Affordable colleges.** In the first 100 hours of the new Democratic Congress, the House will **cut interest rates in half on college loans** for middle class students. After that, the Committee will begin work on the reauthorization of the **Higher Education Act**, with the goal of making postsecondary education a more efficient and effective system. The Committee will seek to: make a college degree affordable for every qualified student by raising the maximum **Pell Grant scholarship**; work with colleges and other relevant stakeholders to devise strategies to contain costs; examine the cost effectiveness of the different student loan programs; increase student retention; and analyze ways for higher education to be more accountable to the federal government and taxpayers.

✓ **A competitive workforce.** Last November, Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and other House Democrats unveiled their **Innovation Agenda – A Commitment to Competitiveness to Keep American Number One**. The Committee will address the issue of U.S. economic competitiveness in an increasingly tough global economy. Democrats want to create good-paying jobs here at home – and *keep* them here for generations to come.

✓ **Fairness in the workplace.** In the first 100 hours of the new Democratic Congress, the House will raise the **national minimum wage** from \$5.15 to \$7.25. After that, the Committee will seek to promote **workers' rights**; improve **workplace safety**; conduct oversight on the **enforcement of labor laws** – like overtime pay – that are already on the books; help workers balance the demands of **work and family**; and look for ways to make **healthcare** affordable and accessible for everyone.

✓ **Retirement security.** The Committee will thoroughly examine what must be done to solve the nation's retirement security crisis and ensure that retirees have the financial resources they need to get them through their golden years. For starters, the Committee will look at hidden fees in **401(k) plans** that could be eating into Americans' retirement savings accounts; and it will look for ways to encourage companies to keep offering **traditional pensions** to their employees.

✓ **Accountability and responsibility.** The Committee will conduct **thorough oversight** over the government agencies within its jurisdiction to ensure that they are operating as effectively and efficiently as possible. Oversight is a key constitutional role of the Congress, and it is critical to guaranteeing that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.